

Episode: “Holy Purity, The Joyful Virtue”

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My Lord and my God, I firmly believe that you are here, that you see me, that you hear me. I adore you with profound reverence. I ask your pardon for my sins and the grace to make this time of prayer fruitful, my Immaculate Mother, St Joseph, my father and Lord my guardian angel, intercede for me.

In the Gospel, I have your life, my Lord, or at least part of it, miracles, revelations, parables, with a lot of teachings. And besides knowledge, the Gospel is an experience, right? I can know you, not only repeat your words or contemplate you like a piece of a museum or a legend in history, as I do with other people that lived in this world. But I enter into your heart and also into your personality in a way which is very difficult to define. The personality of Jesus Christ, so rich that you can always see something new or explore more and get deeper, right? But it is a very interesting exercise to see the reactions of Jesus Christ, how he behaved. Let's take a look at the chapter number two of St. Mark's Gospel. Remember, St. Mark is taking notes from preaching, from the preaching, or from the meditations from St. Peter. The tradition of the Church says that the notes of those meditations or talks made the Gospel of St. Mark. So it's a very direct approach, and the direct contact with Jesus Christ through St. Peter, then Mark learned all these things. So in order to know the personality of Jesus, we are listening to St. Peter and his memories.

One of them says that once again, Jesus went out along the sea, and Peter remembered that day, and all the crowd came to him, and he taught them, people asking questions. Maybe it was early in the morning. We don't know, maybe at night, after dinner, but then the Gospel says that, the sea, as he passed by, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He was a tax collector, and the tax collector back then, was a traitor for Jewish people, because it was a guy working for the Roman Empire, paying money to the country or to the emperor that was subjugating you. So it was a traitor. Bad reputation for a tax collector, obviously. And then Jesus passed by that sitting post, sitting place where, where Levi was working, and he said to him, “Follow me. Let's, let's talk.” Maybe they had some other conversations before they knew each other. And that day, Jesus said, “Follow me. Let's change the world.”

How beautiful it is Jesus, to feel, to know, that you are calling me to something greater than myself. The Gospel says, in order to remark that he was free to do that, he said that he got up and followed him at once. But not only that, while he was at table in his own house, Levi, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples. And this is the first kind of alarm, or first thing they say, “Oh, that's interesting. That is different. Jesus having dinner with sinners and tax collectors, people with bad reputation.”

And I want to stop here in my meditation of the clasp of the Gospel, and just again go back to this thought of looking at your personality, entering into the way you approach things, and then look at you, my Lord, as a teacher, as a friend, as a Messiah, of course, being very close to people, to all sorts of people, and you were not shy. You were not in the corner talking about the Temple or talking about the Torah. You were probably talking that day about something that people would understand in that party. So you would adapt yourself to the possibilities, to the things that they knew, maybe some horses, maybe some special, you know, dealings that they had some business. Maybe they were talking about money or a new cloth or a new whatever, superficial things, but not bad things in themselves, just a little superficial. And then you were, you know, being part of that, with naturalness entering into other people's lives without imposing yourself, giving them some room to get to know you, and you being interested, "Oh, that color is so bright," or that whatever that thought they never, and Our Lord, you know, engaging in conversations. And because of that, tax collectors, sinners were able to see mercy, to see hope and to see an attractive guy, a very likable, approachable, that was respecting them and encouraging them to have a better life.

Topic of this second meditation today is the virtue of holy purity as a joyful affirmation. It is about the integrity of a person. And modesty or purity manifests in dress and manner, in gestures and speech and in choosing places of entertainment that are wisely, you know, adapt to our dignity. And when I see you, my Lord, in this scene of the Gospel, among other virtues, I can see naturalness and purity. You were there smoothly changing the environment, not being against people, not being just rigid or distant. You were being very approachable, and at the same time you were not accepting the status quo, and say, well, it doesn't matter. No, you were raising the tone, and we see Levi, a second later, giving themselves to you, following you, saying, my property's for the poor. I have discovered a new light, but that new light has a kind of a making of which is the friendship of Jesus Christ.

The purity of Jesus is attractive, is not stiff. Is a purity that's compatible with loving the world as a creation, and is the purity and the way to change the world. Our Lord may want, may want to, to convey through your personality, I want to imitate you, my Lord, in everything, also in the naturalness that you lived in your life. You lived modesty. You talk to a lot of women in the Gospel. We saw when, we see many times Jesus talking to women and to sinners, even to prostitutes. And Our Lord was keeping his eyes recollected, focusing on their souls, but talking to them.

I remember it was very shocking to me when I read the biography of St Josemaria, one of them, Vázquez de Prada is a big one, three volumes. When he was a young priest, a younger priest, at the beginning of his ministry, he went to Madrid, and then they told him that there was this guy dying, young person dying, maybe in his 20s, and, and it was St. Josemaria knew someone that knew that guy and he was asked to bring him Communion, and hear his confession before dying. Problem was that this man was the brother of a prostitute that was running a house of a prostitution. So, St. Josemaria, in a very prudential way, went to ask permission to the bishop of the city, and he made a deal with another old guy, very respectful guy, and venerable guy, gentleman. And they went together one morning, and they knocked on the door of this house of prostitution, and they wanted to talk to the sister, to this woman renting the place, and they told her, St. Josemaria, as a priest, Father Josemaria said to her, "Listen, your brother's dying. I'm willing to help him with the Blessed Eucharist and with Confession, but you need to promise me that you will make an exception for that day when I come." And the woman was moved, and she said, "Father, you have my word. If you come tomorrow, nobody will be here, nobody will work." Quote, unquote, "Tomorrow, here, you have my word." And so St Josemaria came back with this elderly man, with the gentleman to bring Jesus to the gates of hell, so to speak, right? Because you cannot go farther. You cannot offend God in order to save a person. But he was literally going to one of the most dangerous places for your soul that you can imagine, of course, with prudence. Accompanied by this elder man, but, um,

but he went there, and the guy received Communion and confession and died a few days later, and he's probably in Heaven right now contemplating God face to face, because someone had mercy and someone had, you know, the decency of reaching out to him and telling him you have dignity.

Jesus, I want to bring you to the rest of the world. And of course, I live in a world that is crazy many times with pornography, and we live in the world of Tinder, hookup culture, I know that, but I have you, and when I see in the Gospel, reaching out to people that were lost and with your love, with your prayer, with your naturalness, reaching out to them and encouraging them to change, I feel hope too that I can do the same in my life first. And also bringing you to other people that's, that's such a dream to know that I'm here in this world to wash the whole human race from the Original Sin with you and to bring it back clean and purified and, and with the joy of being free from that slavery of pornography or lust, to your Father, to bring back to the world dignity. That's the battle that we are at, and is an awesome opportunity for us to grow, for me to grow. And it is so attractive.

St Josemaria in *Furrow*, this little book with notes that he had from his personal prayer says, "Be convinced of this. Be convinced, realize your apostolate consists in spreading goodness, light, enthusiasm, generosity, spirit of sacrifice, constancy in work, deep study, complete self-surrender, being up to date, cheerful and complete, in complete obedience to the Church and a perfect charity." So, this is your apostolate. Your friendship with others should reflect the good, the light, the beauty of God, and your purity is part of it, and especially in our world, people are thirsty from knowing what's the real deal about human dignity, and I can give it to them.

Some weeks ago, we had a talk in the school where I work about pornography and and the kids were so grateful, and we gave them some books by spiritual authors and some ideas. One of the guys came to me few days later, saying, "Father, we need to talk. I was talking to this girlfriend I have over the phone, and we are not dating, but we were just friends. She goes to another school that is a public school, and I told her the whole thing of the talks and and she said, I want to see that book." And the guy said, "Oh, sure, next time we meet." And say, and she said, "I want to see it now." And the guy said, "Sure." "And then can I?" And then she said, "Can I drive now to your house? I want to read this book this weekend. I cannot wait." So she did. And later on, they met, and she was almost in tears, saying, "I didn't know any of this, and I'm so happy. I'm so I feel so so much freedom now. You don't realize the school that you have, the education that you have, is just amazing. I didn't know anything of this, so released." And my friend, I mean, the kid, was still, you know, excited about it. "And we can do a lot in this world. I didn't know that either, that people are so thirsty." I said, "Of course they are. It's just a big difference to be, to live like an animal, like a pig, or to live with the freedom and the dignity of the children of God. Such a big difference."

I am so grateful, my Lord, that you are raising me, keeping myself as I am human, as I see you in that party going to Levi's house, talking about horses and and businesses. Okay, fine, for a while, in order to just to be part of this world, and then to to understand other people's needs and and humanly speaking, to engage with them, of course. And I am engaged in sports and in entertainment. I love it. I'm precisely because I love it. I want to be a reflection of something deeper than just brutality. I want to bring back dignity, respect, love, and I don't lose anything in doing that. On the contrary, the more pure, the more attractive.

I came across recently to this American [British] writer and mystic and poet, Caryl Chessman, a lay woman, and she explains in her autobiography her conversion. And it is always every conversion is a mystery and a miracle, and you can learn a lot from that. And then she got such an experience. She says that I was, it's a long quote, but I really like it. "I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all

sorts of people jostle together, sitting and strap hanging, workers of every description, going home at the end of the day. So, classic scene that you see in a subway, maybe in a big city, quite suddenly, I saw in my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Jesus Christ in them all, everybody's there, jostled together, coming back home, tired, whatever." And then she had this kind of inspiration from the Holy Spirit to perceive, to see Jesus. Jesus, you, my Lord, inside them all, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them. So, in other words, she's describing like, in that corner I saw this, you know, this man that is old and probably is coming back from the doctor, and he's scared because, whatever. And on the other side I see this mom cleaning the mouth of this little boy that is eating a donut and is a mess. And then and he and she sees. Okay, Jesus is accompanying the old guy with his sorrows. And on the side, Jesus is having fun with this mom cleaning her son. And on the other side, I see this boyfriend and girlfriend making plans about their dreams, their family, their engagement, whatever, and Jesus is there. Jesus in every single human life, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them, accompanying us.

Jesus, in my body and in my soul, in very spiritual things and in very human things, you are present. I came out into the street. She continues and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passing by, everywhere, Jesus. Jesus is all over the place. Jesus is everywhere in him, she says, every kind of life has a meaning and an influence in every other kind of life, how beautiful to see the connection between meaningful lives.

I have a meaningful life. I'm here in this world touched by you, my Lord, I have a purpose, and that meaning that I have in my life provides for dignity to other people. I can touch with divine hands your presence in every single human being. And I can have an influence. I should have an influence. The quote continues and says, she says, "after a few days, the vision faded. People looked the same again. There was no longer the same shock of insight for each time I was face to face with another human being, but Christ was still there, now hidden. Indeed, through the year to come, I would have to seek for him, and usually I would find him in others and still in myself, only through a deliberate and blind act of faith." End of the quote. So she had that vision, she perceived that Jesus was present in every single human life with naturalness. And after some days she said, "Where is Jesus? Again, I cannot see, I cannot feel it, but I know that he is there and then my my goal in this life is to seek for him, and I want to seek for you in every heart. I want to understand my Lord, that my body and my soul are your place to be."

Some years ago, I had a chance to have a I had a chance to have a little repair, to make a little repair in the chapel in Rome where St Josemaria prayed when he was alive. It's a beautiful, small chapel, and it has a very unique tabernacle, because it has a shape of a dove and is hanging from the ceiling. It's a very small tabernacle, beautiful, made out of gold, and the Eucharist fits just inside the chest of this dove. There, and you put it back, and it's hanging from the ceiling. It's very classy and beautiful, and it's very easy to pray there, as you can imagine. So I was, I was making my repair there, my little thing, and I took advantage of being there to pray. I contemplated the tabernacle, and it helped me to see the beauty of people shaping that tabernacle for the glory of God, for the Eucharist, creating that space that is sacred and so fitting to prayer and to conversion and to resolutions. Right? So he helped me. But later on, I was thinking that Our Lord being very happy of the effort that we put into sacred vase vessels and and the linens and everything is clean, and it should be very reverent and and rich, if we can put money, there is an act of generosity and a gift for for God. And I'm sure that he loves it, but he doesn't want to be there. Our Lord didn't come to this world to be in boxes of made out of gold. I mean as beauty, beautiful as they are. You, my Lord, you came here to be in my heart and in my body. You created the Eucharist, not to enter into boxes, but to enter into. You wanted to enter into lives. You wanted to touch personalities and people and loves. That's the the place that you want to be. This is what St Paul says, "We are temples of the Holy Trinity. We are

Tabernacles. We are the dream of God.” And in the Book of Wisdom, it says, “I delight playing with the sons of men. That's my delight, that's my dream.” It's God talking through the prophet. So, my human love, in most of you, the human love that you have for your girlfriend or boyfriend or people that you love is not just it's not an obstacle. It's just is precisely what God has dreamt about, and that love is connected to the love of God, the Father, creating new human beings.

Sexuality is one of the most powerful and beautiful treasures that we have in this world. And we are not obsessed against that. We are actually promoting life, promoting dignity and protection and also the enjoyment of falling in love. That's a beautiful thing. That's something created by God. There's nothing wrong. This is just beautiful God. We were saying in the first meditation. The first miracle was at a wedding feast, Jesus Christ blessing with both hands a married couple and their love and their jokes and their dances and the makeup of the women and the shoes of the men and the ties and you know, whatever, everything that makes life beautiful, music, a postcard, a poem, a song, a kiss, a caress, a moment together that is intimate. All of those things are blessed by God, and purity touches all of them. And then, my Lord, I apply this vision that you have in the case of husbands and wives to the whole reality of the human life and the human family, and there's no difference between calling from the phone, saying, “I love you,” texting, sending a picture, you know, having an intimate moment just in the kitchen, like a moment of enjoyment or or putting to sleep the kids, or dancing, or having a date in the middle of the week after 20 years of marriage, having a date and buying some flowers and dressing well in order to please the other side whatever is all the same. This is a sexual aspect of giving myself to you, to the other person. And this is connected with not only giving ourselves to each other, but with the possibility that God may, through that love, bring a new life to this world.

Can you imagine a better deal than that? Fatherhood, motherhood is participation in creating with God. Love, people able to love, free people able to love. What about that Jesus? That is so powerful. Thank you for elevating marriage to sacrament, to a vocation. And purity makes sense there. And it's not a stiff thing. It's not a sad thing. It's not, no, it's just a contrast the most beautiful and poetic and musical way of loving and is respectful, and it helps you to discover with wonder every other heart and to give myself entirely to that person that I said, “I will love you till I die.” That is so beautiful. That's a gift. Let's ask Mary and Joseph to discover that love.

I remember when I was in Rome. I really liked in the place where I lived, there was an image of the Blessed Family, and both Mary and Joseph had a ring. And I never thought about it until I saw that image. They were with Jesus playing or whatever, and both of them had a ring, and it was a simple ring that shows you affection, unity, respect, love, fun, many moments together, memories, dreams about the future. That ring is, is is a symbol of their own lives together. Every marriage is symbolically represented in in those rings that are so so meaningful, right? And it represents the whole person, body and soul, thoughts, actions, memories, imagination, everything is touched by love. Let's ask Mary and Joseph to protect, to increase our love, to protect our love, and to bring it to the world. The world is thirsty. Let's pray for every single human being that is thinking about giving himself or herself to love, to build a family. Let's recreate in the world the plans that God had at the beginning of history, of fidelity, of generosity, of purity, of modesty, of joy. Mary and Joseph, protect our marriages, protect our families and protect the next generation, the people that are now thinking about it, give them hope, give them the light, the cheerfulness, the smile that you always had in your face and help them to have Jesus in their bodies and in their souls.

I thank you, my God, for the good, resolutions, affections and inspirations that you have communicated to me in this meditation. I ask your help to put them into effect. My Immaculate Mother, St Joseph, my father and Lord my guardian angel, intercede for me.